

# City of Brentwood leaders ponder impact of residential growth on the general plan

[Kyle Szymanski Staff Writer](#) - May 26, 2016

Brentwood was the sixth fastest-growing city in California last year, but city officials are questioning whether it's growing in the right way.

"When Brentwood builds out to maximum capacity, it is supposed to have a balance of jobs and housing," said Community Development Director Casey McCann. "The dilemma that Brentwood faces today is that growth numbers show Brentwood is building out as a bedroom community and not as the balanced and diverse community the general plan is calling for."

The general plan guides development decisions related to land use, community design, transportation, public services and resource conservation for the next 15 to 20 years. It calls for the creation of 33,800 jobs by the time the city reaches a build-out population of 81,000, but with the city's current population at 58,784 and growing, the number of jobs is just below 12,000, McCann said.

"Ideally, we would love to see more jobs in the area," said Senior Community Development Analyst Kwame Reed. "That is going to be our goal – to try to get a much more balanced housing-to-job ratio in the area."

McCann said the long-term question hanging over the city is if Brentwood builds out as a bedroom community, will tax revenue from residential property be enough to fund public services and facilities?

The city is seeking a consultant to develop an economic-development strategy and plans to begin working on a community build-out plan. The plan will address how, where and when the city will build out. Relying heavily on public input, it will begin in the fall.

"All the evidence suggests that bedroom communities over time ... are in a much more difficult position in terms of meeting fiscal sustainability goals, as compared to those communities that have a much more diverse economic base, which is being called out for by the general plan," McCann said.

As the city seeks to attract more jobs, there are signs of hope. Vacancy rates for commercial and flex space, which have hovered around 10 percent for the past five years, are down to around 6 percent, Reed said.

Private investor Sean McCauley is on the front lines of the changing, commercial, real-estate market. He recently acquired a 38,000-square-foot establishment on Central Boulevard and is fielding 10 to 15 calls a week about the property, which features office and administrative space with executive and business suites.

McCauley estimates the property, which is only 18 percent occupied, will be 89 to 95 percent filled in a year – potentially bringing up to 110 new employees to the area.

“We have seen a two or threefold ramp-up in Brentwood,” he said. “People want to work here and be here. It’s a good place to work and live.”

In addition to the changing vacancy rates, McCauley said he’s receiving inquiries from businesses in other areas, like Walnut Creek and Palo Alto, which he attributes to improved transportation options, lower rents and a desire to have employees work where they live. He predicts commercial building will increase in the next one to five years.

“I have always seen commercial building follow residential,” he said.

Reed said, though part of the city’s economic development strategy will focus on bringing new businesses to Brentwood, it’s also important to satisfy the ones that are already here.

“A lot of times, cities like to go after the big job markets and big job attractors, but you want to make sure you take care of the ones that are already here,” he said. “In fact, those will help you recruit other business, if they see that the ones that are here are being successful and have the ability to expand and grow.”

It’s expected the city’s community build-out plan will wrap up in mid-2018.